Characters

- Maggie
- Paul
- Flaco
- Sal
- Boochie
- Little Tuna
- Big Tuna

Act 1

ACT ONE

Maggie's apartment. Maggie is in tears; Paul is doing his utmost to be supportive.

MAGGIE

I feel so stupid right now —

PAUL

— It's okay.

MAGGIE

I mean, this is so *dumb* —

PAUL

— It's not dumb!

MAGGIE

I'm sorry Paul; I don't think I can do this —

PAUL

— Maggie, let me tell you, I've been right where you are right now, and it's hard! It's hard to reach out! It's hard to own up!

MAGGIE

Paul —

PAUL

— You're brave … Don't look at me like that! *You are brave.* Let me ask you something: Is this the first time

you've shoplifted since you entered the program?

MAGGIE

Yeah?

PAUL

You haven't stolen anything up till now?

MAGGIE

Not since I entered the program.

PAUL

And when did you go to your first program meeting?

MAGGIE

Two Sundays ago.

PAUL

And tonight you stole?

MAGGIE

I did, I stole! —

PAUL

And then you came home and immediately called a fellow program member and reached out!

MAGGIE

Well, you left your number on my machine —

PAUL

— And you used it! The first time you stole, you reached out!

MAGGIE

But —

PAUL

— I gotta tell you, I've been theft-free for 682 days now, but I stole like a dozen times before I was ever brave enough to reach out. And you, you did it the very first time!

MAGGIE

You've been theft-free 682 days? What's it feel like?

PAUL

Feels like one day at a time, Maggie.

MAGGIE

… I, I'm scared Paul, I can't hardly speak, I got a big lump in my throat

PAUL

Hey, the first time I did what you're about to do, I had a big lump too.

MAGGIE

Yeah?

PAUL

I had a SNIB.

MAGGIE

SNIB?

PAUL

Spontaneous Nerve-Induced Bowel-Movement. I pooped my pants.

MAGGIE

You what? —

PAUL

Hey, I thank my Higher Power every day for that SNIB 'cuz I gotta tell you: I was afraid to *reach out* just like you; I wanted to *hold it all in,* and my Higher Power, he knew that, and so "He did for me what I could not do for myself:" He forced me to let it out, and believe me, I "let it out" … God has a plan for us all, Maggie. For me, it was that I should defecate in my favorite pair of slacks. For you, it's that you're here, right now, with me … So … Here we go, the big moment of truth! Are you ready?

MAGGIE

I guess.

PAUL

Okay … So, where is it?

MAGGIE

What?

PAUL

Whatever you stole. Where is it?

MAGGIE

In my bag here.

PAUL

… So What did you steal, Maggie?

(Maggie opens the bag, takes out Yodels.)

Yodels. Okay You stole Yodels.

(She takes out toothpaste.)

Toothpaste. Okay, you stole Yodels and toothpaste.

(She takes out more stuff.)

Aged parmesan cheese, pesto sauce, room freshener … What's this?

MAGGIE

I'm not sure. Some kind of fruit.

(A lot more stuff spills out.)

PAUL

Two tomatoes.

MAGGIE

Eight ninety-nine a pound! Can you believe it?

PAUL

Who's robbing who, huh? … So, is that it?

(Maggie empties

bag, many products spill out.)

That's quite a haul; you must be good —

MAGGIE

There's more.

(She empties her pockets.)

PAUL

Is that it?

MAGGIE

Um …

PAUL

It's okay. Show me what else.

MAGGIE

Oh God —

PAUL

Hey, it's okay.

MAGGIE

I stole this change purse from that old lady in the wheelchair who was sitting next to me at the meeting tonight.

PAUL

Willamina?

MAGGIE

I don't know what came over me. She was so sweet and supportive and nurturing — and I stole from her; that sweet old lady —

PAUL

— Hey, she did eight years in Attica for armed robbery, she wasn't always sweet.

MAGGIE

For real?

PAUL

She was only paroled six months ago.

MAGGIE

I don't know how I'll face her.

PAUL

You'll face her … So, anything else?

MAGGIE

You got a cigarette?

PAUL

Don't smoke. Not for 348 days.

MAGGIE

Paul?

PAUL

Yes.

MAGGIE

Here.

PAUL

That's my …! You stole my wallet?

MAGGIE

I'm *deeply* sorry.

PAUL

How'd you steal my wallet?

MAGGIE

Remember on the elevator?

PAUL

What?

MAGGIE

I brushed up against you?

PAUL

I thought you were flirting.

MAGGIE

I wasn't.

PAUL

Wow! I must be slipping.

MAGGIE

No, I'm just good.

(Beat.)

PAUL

Can I ask you something?

MAGGIE

What?

PAUL

Do you think it's possible that by stealing my wallet you were maybe, I dunno, subconsciously trying to get my attention?

'Cuz I mean, I've seen you staring at me before, tonight even —

MAGGIE

— I was starin' at the money you were counting at the beginning of the meeting — it looked like a lot of money.

PAUL

Damn, I am slipping: flashing my wad in a room full of fuckin' kleptos! I mean, Maggie, don't get me wrong —

MAGGIE

— No, you're right.

PAUL

No I'm not! I am wrong and I need to make an amends to you immediately! I apologize … See, that's the *old* me that made that "klepto" remark. The *new* me wants to trust. And I'm working to trust One Day at a Time. I trust you, Maggie. I want you to know that. You stole my wallet, but than you returned it, no harm, no foul.

(He looks inside the wallet.)

Where's my fucking money?!

MAGGIE

I'll pay you back —

PAUL

Pay me back?! Just give it back.

MAGGIE

They were gonna kick me outta here, Paul — I needed it for rent!

PAUL

I had 800 bucks in there! I was planning to attend a holistic wellness retreat in Vail, Colorado!

MAGGIE

Look. I got a TV, some stereo equipment, I got a new microwave. Take it! Take all of it! I'm a fuck-up, I don't belong in the program! I thought I did but I don't. I'm incurable. I'm sorry, Paul.

PAUL

Maggie —

MAGGIE

— No! I gave this self-help thing a try. I went to meetings, got my "chakra's aligned"; I became real familiar with the personal growth section of Barnes & Noble. I tried, and I'll never be better, I'll always be like this! I'm a bad person and I can't be saved, and even if I could, I'm not worthy of a better life, I'm not worthy of anything! I'm going to bed now. Take what you want, just, leave the food and close the door behind you.

(Maggie picks up the Yodels from the pile of stolen goods and starts heading for her bedroom.)

PAUL

Maggie!

MAGGIE

Goodbye, Paul.

PAUL

Put the Yodels down, Maggie!

MAGGIE

What?

PAUL

Gimme the Yodels.

MAGGIE

No!

PAUL

Maggie, you don't wanna eat those!

MAGGIE

Yes I do! … And I want that Heathbar too!

PAUL

You can't have the Heathbar, Maggie!

MAGGIE

Gimme the Heathbar, Paul!

PAUL

Gimme the yodels!

MAGGIE

Look, I'm not playing Paul. You're a nice guy and all, but don't fuck with my food!

PAUL

You're a Compulsive Overeater too, aren't you?!

MAGGIE

I'm gonna compulsively kick you in the fuckin' ass if you don't back away from my damn food!

PAUL

I know what you're going through.

MAGGIE

Heathbar!

PAUL

You're overloaded with shame and guilt —

MAGGIE

Step off my fuckin' food!

PAUL

— Anger, yes! —

MAGGIE

Get outta my apartment!

PAUL

— Maggie —

MAGGIE

Get out! Call a cop, bust me, turn me in, I don't care! Just move away from the food and get out!!!

PAUL

Don't open those Yodels, Maggie! Maggie, Goddamnit! Halt! … NOW, PUT THE FUCKIN' YODELS DOWN! I'm not letting you eat them for two reasons: number one, they're stolen; and me and you are gonna gather all this stuff up and return it. All of it! Because that is how the program works. You called me tonight because you knew you had to reach out and that you had to return the stuff and make amends with the storekeeper. *Reach out and Return,* the first principle of the program. You called me tonight because you are

brave, Maggie, you called me because you wanna turn it around. You're a winner, Maggie. You're gonna lick this, I can tell. Six months from now, you'll be leading workshops, visiting prisons, talking to youngsters at school. You'll be making a difference. Now, you could eat those Yodels and just give the guy the seventy-nine cents but I'm not going to let you do that to yourself 'cuz you're a compulsive overeater, aren't you?

MAGGIE

… I'm a compulsive everything.

PAUL

Look, you got a problem with junk food and you got a problem with larceny. You're already working on the larceny, and I'd be glad to take you to an O˙A˙ meeting.

MAGGIE

O˙A˙?

PAUL

Overeaters Anonymous, I'm an O˙A˙ member.

MAGGIE

You don't look like no overeater.

PAUL

I used to weigh four-hundred pounds.

MAGGIE

No way.

PAUL

Here's a photo of me on a horse.

MAGGIE

Oh my God!

PAUL

Now here's a picture of that same horse ten minutes later.

MAGGIE

Is it sleeping?

PAUL

Afraid not. I look at this picture everyday to remind me of the pain and suffering, and in this case, death, that my compulsive overeating has cost myself and others … Back then, I was a mess. I smoked four packs of

cigarettes a day, and when I wasn't sitting in front of the TV inhaling food, I was robbing this town blind. I was a big, fat, chain-smoking, kleptomaniac. I was miserable. I hated myself. Hated myself so much I couldn't function. Have you ever felt that way?

MAGGIE

… All the time.

PAUL

… Can I ask you something?

MAGGIE

What?

PAUL

Do you like … life?

MAGGIE

I, I don't know.

PAUL

I *like* life. I really do. I didn't always feel that way.

(Pause.)

MAGGIE

I can't believe I stole 800 bucks from you and you're still being so nice to me.

PAUL

Hey, all you gotta do is apologize for your actions sincerely and promise to make reparations and we're square. In fact, it would be an honor to be the first person that you exercised the first principle with.

MAGGIE

Paul —

PAUL

— Just try it.

(Pause.)

MAGGIE

Paul, I …

PAUL

You …

MAGGIE

Stole … Paul, I stole … I stole …

PAUL

800 …

MAGGIE

Paul. I stole 800 dollars from you. I'm …

PAUL

Good. You're doing good.

MAGGIE

I'm ashamed and embarrassed and I'm very, very, very sorry and I plan to pay you back. Look: Here's four bucks: I owe you 796 dollars, okay?

PAUL

I gladly accept your apology.

MAGGIE

… Dag! I just practiced the first principle, didn't I?

(Paul claps for Maggie.)

PAUL

Yes you did … Hug?

MAGGIE

Okay.

(They hug.)

PAUL

… How do you feel?

MAGGIE

Hungry.

PAUL

You want a banana?

MAGGIE

You got a banana?

PAUL

I always carry around a couple of bananas in case I get hungry — keeps me out of Mickey D's … Here.

MAGGIE

Thanks.

PAUL

I think I'll have one too.

(Beat. They eat Bananas.)

You're not single, right?

MAGGIE

I broke up with my boyfriend a couple of months ago. Why?

PAUL

No, just … conversation. Not, uh, — why'd you break up?

MAGGIE

'Cuz he's a lying cheating drinkin' druggin' con artist.

PAUL

I see.

MAGGIE

I mean, Flaco had his good points —

PAUL

— Flock O?!

MAGGIE

It means skinny in Spanish.

PAUL

He's Latino?

MAGGIE

He thinks he is. Flaco, he's one of those spur-of-the-moment people, which is cool, if, like, you don't ever

wanna make something of yourself, which, I *do* wanna make something of myself, which is why I broke up with him. I don't wanna turn into no career criminal — which is where we were headed. But, you prolly don't know nothin' about that kinda stuff, Paul.

PAUL

Whaddya mean?

MAGGIE

You know — you're, like, you know.

PAUL

I'm like what?

MAGGIE

Nah. Never mind.

PAUL

Hey, let me tell you something: Back in the day, I had mad street creds.

MAGGIE

Nah, yeah, I'm sure.

PAUL

I mean — you ever crack a safe?

MAGGIE

No. Why? Did you?

PAUL

Okay — you ever hear of Maury Handleman?

MAGGIE

Who?

PAUL

Old time safe-cracker? Used to be the leader of The Den of Thieves?

MAGGIE

Who's The Den of Thieves?

PAUL

They were the greatest non-violent Jewish crime organization of the twentieth century. Maury Handleman

and his crew cracked over 200 safes in the thirties and forties without ever being caught, and without ever harming a single individual. They were so good, hardly anyone to this day even knows they existed. Maury Handleman is my grandfather.

MAGGIE

For real?

PAUL

Yup.

MAGGIE

He must be got a lot a money, huh?

PAUL

Nope — He's a locksmith in Brooklyn Heights.

MAGGIE

He's not rich?

PAUL

That's not what The Den of Thieves were about. All the money? They gave it away.

MAGGIE

What?

PAUL

Yup. Funneled it to liberal politicians to build libraries.

MAGGIE

Libraries?!

PAUL

See, The Den of Thieves were immigrants. Poor and uneducated. They wanted to build a future for their children. They knew that success could be attained through education, so they set out to improve the educational system by building more libraries in poor neighborhoods so the poor could have a chance to catch up to the rich. Anyway, once they got too old for the rigors of criminal life, they split up and opened little businesses. My grandfather became a locksmith. He taught me all of it, lock picking, safe cracking — in fact — I noticed your front door locks are pathetic. I could fix them if you'd like me to.

MAGGIE

You ever crack a safe?

PAUL

Broke into a White Castle once. Got about eighty-nine bucks and a couple hundred burgers. But, I'm all done with that now. I have my health, I have my sobriety, I'm smoke-free, drug-free, debt-free, meat, sugar, dairy, and wheat-free, and because of the program, I'm theft-free. I can honestly say I'll never go back.

MAGGIE

That's amazing Paul, really.

PAUL

… Yeah, so … you and this Flaco guy … no turning back?

MAGGIE

Well, he's still having trouble getting the hint. I walked out of there two months 'go, right, but he still thinks like we're together, still follows me around, still insanely jealous, even though he's already shacked up with some other chick. He follows me around the city and if anybody even looks at me — forget it — !

PAUL

He's never hit you, has he?

MAGGIE

He's not that way. He only gets violent when he's jealous.

PAUL

Sounds like a very disturbed individual.

MAGGIE

One time, he got into a fight with this big muscle guy on Orchard Beach who was looking at me and made a comment.

PAUL

What kind of comment?

MAGGIE

Something like, "Dag, girl, you so fine, why you hangin' out with that soft faggot bitch white-boy suckah?"

PAUL

… Ouch.

MAGGIE

This guy looked like fuckin' Arnold Schwartzenegger and Flaco's a string bean. But Flaco took him on anyway. This guy, he was beating Flaco really really bad until, all a the sudden, they were rolling around on the sand and Flaco — he pulled down the big guy's Speedo — and bit the guy's ass so hard that not only did the big guy give up, but Flaco, when he got up, he spitted pieces of the guy's ass at him as he ran away.

PAUL

Sounds like a maniac.

MAGGIE

Let's put it this way if Flaco were to walk in right now and find you here, you might be leavin' missing half your ass.

(There is a loud knock at the door.)

FLACO

Yo, mami, open up! …

MAGGIE

Oh, shit! It's him!

PAUL

Who?

MAGGIE

Him!

PAUL

You mean, Flaco?!

(Louder knocking.)

FLACO

Yo, I brought you a nice present! Open up!

MAGGIE

You'd better hide.

PAUL

Where?

MAGGIE

Under the table.

FLACO

I hear voices!

PAUL

You can't just introduce me as a platonic friend?

MAGGIE

You wanna take that risk?

FLACO

OPEN THE FUCKIN' DOOR!!!

PAUL

I'll hide. But try to get rid of him fast.

(Paul hides under the table. Maggie opens door.)

FLACO

Oh, ma Gawd! Am I glad to see you, baby!

MAGGIE

What do you want, Flaco?

FLACO

Yo, what kind of a greeting is that?

MAGGIE

Look, I was just about to go to sleep —

FLACO

— Well, wake up! We got a lot of work to do, and not much time to do it.

MAGGIE

Flaco —

FLACO

Yo! … What's that smell?!

MAGGIE

What smell?

(Flaco sniffs.)

FLACO

Old Spice … I smell Old Spice!

MAGGIE

I don't smell anything —

FLACO

— Why your apartment smell like after-shave?!

MAGGIE

Well, the super was here yesterday —

FLACO

No, this is a fresh scent! … Yo! Whose bag is that?!

MAGGIE

What bag?

FLACO

"What bag"?! That bag right there! That "looking like a man's bag" bag!

MAGGIE

Go home Flaco; I'm not your girlfriend no more.

FLACO

You got a man in here don't you?!

MAGGIE

No.

FLACO

Deceit! You deceiting me! … Yo, Motherfucker! Come out of your hiding place! I know you're here!

MAGGIE

Get out my apartment, Flaco!

(Beat.)

FLACO

You don't got a man in here?!

MAGGIE

No!

FLACO

Then that must be a prowler under the table.

(Flaco takes out a gun.)

MAGGIE

Flaco!

FLACO

Get out from under that table, mothahfuckah! Are you a prowler, or are you fucking my girlfriend?!

MAGGIE

Flaco! Put that gun down!

FLACO

Identify yourself: prowler, or girlfriend fucker?!

(Paul emerges from under the table.)

PAUL

I'm … I'm … I'm … I'm Paul Handleman, friend, not fucker! Friend. Gay friend. Harmless impotent gay friend!

FLACO

What are you doing here?

MAGGIE

Flaco!

PAUL

No, that's okay, Maggie. I'm here v-v-visiting. From Schenectady. That's upstate.

MAGGIE

Put that fuckin' gun away. Now!

(Flaco complies.)

FLACO

Sorry, baby. I'm a little on edge today.

MAGGIE

What are you doing here, Flaco?

FLACO

I got news!

MAGGIE

What news?

FLACO

It's private. Tell fruit-loops to take a hike.

MAGGIE

His name is Paul Handleman, and he's staying right here.

FLACO

Who is this guy, anyway?! Yo! Who are you?!

PAUL

P-Paul Handleman.

FLACO

"Paul Handleman"?

PAUL

Paul Handleman, yes.

FLACO

… You don't look like no "Paul Handleman" to me!

PAUL

I come from an adoptive home.

FLACO

A what?!

PAUL

A-Adopted. I was adopted. I have five brothers and sisters, and they were all adopted too. My parents, they believe in adoption —

FLACO

— Well thass very fuckin' fascinating, yo, but, I got bidness to discuss with my girl here, so would you mind getting your little adopted ass outta here?

PAUL

I, I'd rather not.

FLACO

You'd rather what?!

PAUL

I, I don't feel comfortable leaving you alone with her.

FLACO

Well, maybe you'd feel more comfortable in a state of unconsciousness!

MAGGIE

Flaco, stop it! Anything you have to say to me, you can say in front of him.

FLACO

But this is bidness.

MAGGIE

I'm not in "bidness" anymore.

FLACO

Yo, this orphan boy don't look like no maricon from upstate! You fucking him, ain't you?!

MAGGIE

You're with that puta-stripper air-head bitch; why you care who I'm with?

FLACO

So you are fucking him!

PAUL

No fucking! Zero! None!

MAGGIE

I'm not with him, Flaco.

FLACO

But you'd like to be, right?!

MAGGIE

Flaco …

FLACO

Who the fuck is this guy?! What's he doing here?!

PAUL

I, I'm her sponsor.

FLACO

Sponsor? What's a sponsor?

PAUL

Maggie's in a twelve-step program for recovering thieves — I'm helping her to recover.

FLACO

Recover what?

MAGGIE

My life, I'm trying to get my life back Flaco. Paul is helping me.

FLACO

What's wrong with your life?

MAGGIE

It sucks. My life sucks!

FLACO

And that's *my* fault?!

MAGGIE

I'm trying to change my life Flaco!

FLACO

You wanna change your life? Well, that's why I came over here, baby! I got something to tell you I guarantee it's gonna change your life — but I can't say it in front of him.

MAGGIE

Why not?

FLACO

It involves, you know, a little bidness.

PAUL

"Criminal" business?

FLACO

Am I talking to you?

PAUL

Maggie let's go. You don't need this element in your life.

FLACO

What'd you call me?! An "element"?!

PAUL

I'm leaving now, Maggie. As your Sponsor, I strongly suggest you don't stay here alone. We can catch a nine o'clock meeting if we leave right now.

FLACO

Yo, Maggie. Don't listen to this little pigeon. He's trying to brainwash you. I been in rehab. It's all about that. They just wanna make you safe, so you're not a threat to them. Look at this stupid ass clown face clown. He probably never committed a felony in his life. What he know about crime?

PAUL

I know a lot about crime. Probably a lot more than you.

FLACO

Yeah right, Bozo. So lissen, Maggie —

PAUL

— You ever crack a safe?!

FLACO

No, Mr˙ Clown Head, I have never cracked a safe. Why? Have you?

PAUL

As a matter of fact I have.

FLACO

Get the fuck outta here.

MAGGIE

Actually, he has, Flaco.

FLACO

Nah, Serious?

PAUL

That's right.

FLACO

You know how to crack safes?

PAUL

I said yes.

FLACO

For Real? … Oh, my God! This is, this is like an omen! Sit down, both of you!

MAGGIE

We're leaving.

FLACO

Yo. You won't wanna leave after you hear what I gotta say.

MAGGIE

Flaco, whatever you're up to —

FLACO

— Up to? Up to? Why you always gotta think I'm up to something? I'm about to change your lives, yo! I'm offering you a way out.

MAGGIE

Of what?

FLACO

Poverty. Low-income housing. All a that! I'm talking 'bout the future, mami. I'm talking easy street. I'm talking about a nest egg that's gonna hatch into economic independence!

MAGGIE

You smoked some of that crack before you got here, didn't you?

PAUL

Nice meeting you, "Flaco." C'mon Maggie, grab your coat —

FLACO

SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS! SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY FUCKIN' THOUSAND DOLLARS, YO! Y'ALL GONNA WALK OUT ON DAT?!

MAGGIE

You're pathetic and sad, Flaco. I pray you find help … Let's go, Paul.

(Beat.)

PAUL

… 750,000 dollars?

MAGGIE

Paul?

PAUL

… Where is this 750,000 dollars?

FLACO

Yo, before I say anything, son, you gotta prove to me that you can crack a safe.

PAUL

Fine. Have you got a safe on you?

FLACO

No.

PAUL

Then I can't prove it. How do you know the money's there?

FLACO

I know somebody in the place.

MAGGIE

Paul!

PAUL

Maggie, I'm not gonna do anything. I'm just talking.

FLACO

Yeah, we just talking.

PAUL

What kind of place is this?

FLACO

Disco. In Tribeca.

PAUL

750,000 dollars in a disco?

FLACO

It's a *V˙I˙P˙* disco, *yo.* Leonardo da Vinci hang out there and shit!

PAUL

Who?

FLACO

"Titanic," mothahfuckah?! You don't watch movies? Yo, Maggie, close the front door! You want everyone in the building to know our bidness?

MAGGIE

This isn't our "bidness." It's your "bidness."

FLACO

Listen, can I talk for a minute? Can I break this down for you?

MAGGIE

We're not interested.

PAUL

Maybe we should hear him out.

MAGGIE

Paul, I thought you swore off a life of crime.

PAUL

I did, I did. But 750,000 dollars!

MAGGIE

You'd trade in all the work you've done on yourself for a slice of 750,000 dollars?

PAUL

I'm not saying definitely. I'm just saying, let's hear him out.

MAGGIE

This shit is fucked up, Flaco! You robbed my youth, my heart, my womanly virtue, now you gonna come in here and try to rob my sponsor?! For some bullshit that you know is bullshit?!

FLACO

Yo, this ain't no bullshit, Maggie. I ain't trying to sell you no dream. This is real. This shit's a limited one-time

offer. This job, this place —— it's criminal how badly they're protecting that money. And you know why? 'Cuz they don't care. They make so much money, that money's like nothing to them, but for us, it's everything. You could do anything you wanted with that money. Buy a car, go to California, go to school, open up a flower store, whatever you want. Just a couple hours work and you're money troubles are *over,* baby. O-V-R-E! We'll all be home free. You too, Handlebag.

PAUL

Handleman.

FLACO

Yeah, whatever.

PAUL

Okay. Let's hear it.

MAGGIE

Paul! You've been theft-free for 682 days!

PAUL

Maggie, recovery is about "Progress, not Perfection." It's

in the Big Book, you can look it up.

MAGGIE

First of all, whatever he's gonna tell us is probably bullshit anyway.

FLACO

Maggie, I've never been more honest in my life. For real! But we gotta do this by midnight 'cuz someone's coming over there to pick up the money.

PAUL

Who?

FLACO

Some European motherfuckers. Will you just hear me out?

PAUL

C'mon, Maggie, hear him out.

FLACO

Check this out: my friend, Raheem, right? He got a friend, who got a friend, who sell crack to this punk who works at this club, right? It's a big fuckin' disco called Epiphany. So I go down there, right, to meet this punk, maybe I can sell him some product. I meet him, he starts buying from me — thinks he's getting a better deal

with me, which he's not — Anyway, I always meet him in this back room office on the ground floor which has an outside entrance. So I hang there, do a deal, watch some Knicks wit' him; I notice they got a *safe.* So I start coolin' with the kid on the regular, know what I'm sayin, and he's at work, but all his job requires is for him to hang in this office. I'm curious. So I befriend the motherfucker and within a week — he's kickin' it all to me! … Turns out the club is selling mad drugs; yo, hallucinogens, speed, X — they're raking it in. And all the drug money goes in this basement safe. Someone comes to pick it up every couple of days. They send the money to, like, Sweden, or some shit. The rest, they roll over to get more product. But here's the thing. They're an independent operation! They ain't paying no one off: no Mafia, no cops no gangs, no no-one! Nobody know shit about it! I mean, it's gonna be all over for them in a couple of weeks. But meantime, they got *money* down there. 750,000 dollars. Someone's coming to pick it up at midnight, which means we got three hours to get there first. Once we've stolen it, no one will care. We're not stealing from cops or mob — there's no reason for them to know or care what we do. And the disco can't say *shit* to anyone because they'll be slaughtered if any of the heavy hitters ever know how much cash they baggin' without paying off. This is a gift from *God,* yo!

PAUL

Are you sure they're not connected?

FLACO

Point of fact, son.

PAUL

So what do you need me for?

FLACO

I need someone who can get in a safe. I was supposed to hook this job a week ago, but the guy I know who does safes was out of town. I've been pagin' him all day. He's still out of town. If Maggie vouches for you, then you're okay with me.

PAUL

How do we get in?

FLACO

Simple. I stole a key yesterday. I meet him, get him to take a walk. Keep him out about twenty minutes. You go in, hit the safe, get the money. I'll meet you back here.

PAUL

Can you get him to go out?

FLACO

This kid's a fuckin' crack-head, yo. He'd stick Cheerios up his ass and sing "La Bamba" if I tol' him to.

PAUL

How about lookouts?

FLACO

Maggie stands outside the outside door. This girl, Boochie, guards the inside door, which leads into the club. But, I'm telling you, no one else goes down there. But just in case, I'm giving this girl Boochie a gun.

PAUL

No guns!

FLACO

Fuck you mean, no guns?

PAUL

I mean no guns! If we can't do this non-violently, I won't participate.

FLACO

Yo, we ain't doin' this without pieces, yo. We gotta have guns!

PAUL

Okay. Find another safecracker.

FLACO

Yo! We won't have to *use* the guns.

MAGGIE

Then why bring them?

FLACO

Yo, you guys are crazy!

MAGGIE

No guns, Flaco!

FLACO

But —

PAUL

— No guns!

FLACO

It's just —

MAGGIE

— No guns!

FLACO

Fine! No guns! No fuckin' guns! All right? You fuckin' happy?!

PAUL

… Who's Boochie?

FLACO

A friend.

MAGGIE

She's his new ho!

FLACO

That ain't my girl, I told you that. Yo, I believe in second

chances, mami. I'll give you yours whenever you could handle it.

PAUL

How're we splitting the money?

FLACO

We could discuss that later.

MAGGIE

No. Now!

FLACO

Okay fine. 300 grand for me, 150 each for the three of you equals 750.

PAUL

You must be joking.

FLACO

Yo, I'm the leader, son! I found it, I planned it, I'm the most visible suspect, I'm taking the biggest risk. 300 grand for me — and I'm doin' y'all a favor!

PAUL

Forget it. I'm out.

MAGGIE

Me too.

PAUL

I don't know what came over me. I'm retired. I'm 682 days theft-free. I'm outta here.

FLACO

Yo! You never heard of negotiating?

PAUL

My *soul* is not negotiable.

(Paul starts to leave.)

FLACO

Okay okay, you little dick! What'd you have in mind?

PAUL

Nothing.

FLACO

C'mon, just give me a figure.

PAUL

You're not gonna like it.

FLACO

Try me.

PAUL

Number One, take out your gun and put it on the table.

FLACO

Yeah, right.

PAUL

You wanna make money tonight? Put the gun on the table.

(Flaco very reluctantly complies.)

I'm taking this gun and throwing it in the sewer … Now, here's the deal: half the money goes to charity.

FLACO

Charity?! As in, like, what: "Give the money away" charity?!

PAUL

375,000 dollars goes towards building a new library right here in this neighborhood. A place where kids can read and learn without bullets flying past their heads.

FLACO

Kids? What Kids?

PAUL

The kids in the neighborhood.

FLACO

Yo, fuck the kids! Let them build their own damn library! This ain't no fuckin' Jerry Lewis Telethon I'm runnin', mothahfuckah! Get the fuck outta here: me and Maggie gonna go find a real safecracker! Right, Maggie?

MAGGIE

If Paul's out, I'm out.

FLACO

Oh ma Gawd! Betrayal! I can't believe you sidin' with him! Thass a dagger in my heart, baby —

MAGGIE

— I'd feel a lot better about this, Flaco, if I thought someone else would benefit from this besides ourselves.

FLACO

Okay okay, fine!!! We'll donate some money to the damn public library! We'll send them a check for, like, 10,000 dollars, okay?!

PAUL

Look, "Flaco," I have a family history of criminal philanthropy to uphold. You ever hear of The Den of Thieves?

FLACO

The who?

PAUL

The Den of Thieves were a gang who grossed over forty-million dollars and gave virtually all of it away.

FLACO

Yeah? They shoulda called themselves the Den of fuckin' Idiots!

PAUL

Well, regardless of your selfish, small minded opinion, they did a lot of good for this city. My grandfather, he was the leader of the Den of Thieves. He passed the torch to me. So basically, it comes down to this: If you wanna get that safe opened, you need me, and my price is this, 375,000 dollars to charity, plus twenty-five large for me.

(Beat. Flaco smolders.)

FLACO

… All I gotta say — Handlebush — is if you can't open that safe, it's gonna be very hazardous to the future shape of your fuckin' head.

PAUL

Have we got a deal?

FLACO

How 'bout you, Maggie? You in?

MAGGIE

Why we using your bimbo? Do you really think she has the attention span for the job?

FLACO

Listen, Boochie is very intelligent and capable. Besides, we ain't got no one else who I can trust. I trust you. I trust her. Thass it.

PAUL

What about me? You don't trust me?

FLACO

Yo. You're very lucky I need you, 'cuz if I didn't, I would smack that smirk right off your Clown Head.

PAUL

You ever been in therapy?

FLACO

You ever been in a coma? 'Cuz I'll put you there!

(A knock at the door.)

BOOCHIE

Flaco? You in there, Flaco?

MAGGIE

Who you got knockin' at my door?

FLACO

It's Boochie — I told her to meet me here. Yo, Boochie! Come on in, it's open.

(Boochie enters in stripper gear.)

BOOCHIE

Hey, baby!

FLACO

What are you wearing?

BOOCHIE

I just got out of work. How are you, poppi chulo?!

(Boochie surveys her surroundings.)

Dag, Flaco! This apartment — it's butt.

FLACO

Boochie, this is Maggie.

BOOCHIE

You mean, "that" Maggie?

FLACO

Yeah. Maggie, this is Boochie.

BOOCHIE

In my mind I pictured you prettier, and not tubby.

MAGGIE

Yeah? Well you're just about what I pictured.

FLACO

Ladies, ladies! Let's keep this professional. This is bidness. Let's get going. Boochie — you can change clothes on the way.

BOOCHIE

Who's this?

FLACO

That's Dick-Head; he's opening the safe.

PAUL

You know, I don't think I feel comfortable working with you. I don't trust you, and I don't think you've planned this out very carefully.

MAGGIE

Me neither.

FLACO

Damn! You people are fucked up! I go and plan a perfect robbery, yo, figure everything out to the last detail. I agree to all your ridiculous conditions, and all you do is criticize! Now listen to me. This robbery is a piece of fuckin' cake! This job is a big, red lollipop. This gonna be as easy as it gets. Retarded children could pull this off! Why? Because I have masterminded it to perfection. I've got every angle covered; every possibility accounted for, which is why I can say to you with absolute certainty, that *nothing* can go wrong. *Nothing!* The only problem we gonna have is how to spend all that cash. I guarantee we will succeed. *Only a bunch of stupid, fucking idiots could mess this up!*

Act 2

Act 2, Scene 1

ACT TWO: Scene 1

A den. Flaco, Paul, Maggie and Boochie are lined up in wooden chairs; their hands, legs, and torsos completely tied up. Bags are over their heads. After a moment, Sal enters speaking on a cell phone and carrying a large gun

SAL

(On phone.)

This the Greek? … Greek, hey, this is Sally 'Nads; Flat Jimmy gave me your number, said — What?! — … The fuck you mean, "Can't take my action"? … Joey the Turtle said what? … Fuck the fuckin'Turtle! Lemme ax you: Do you have any idea who I am? … Well, do you know who my Uncle is? … Thass right, so, maybe I should just tell my *uncle,* The Big fuckin' Tuna, how you disrespect a member of his family, would you like that? … That's What I thought —

PAUL

Help!!!

SAL

Hold on a second, Greek.

(Sal goes to Paul and shoves the gun in his mouth.)

You still there, Greek? Good. Now, gimme ten dimes each on the Rams, Jets, Chargers, Eagles, Dallas, Miami, and um … hold on a second.

(To Paul.)

You follow football?

PAUL

Yeah?

SAL

Who you like, Bears or Lions?

PAUL

L-Lions?

SAL

Lions my ass …

(Back on phone.)

Gimme the Bears, Greek, fifty times … What?! Just take the fuckin' bet! And Lemme tell you this my friend: The next time you don't know who I am … you betta know who I am!

(Louie "The Little Tuna" enters.)

LITTLE TUNA

Who was you talkin' to Sal?

SAL

My mother.

LITTLE TUNA

That wasn't a bookie you was just talkin' to?

SAL

C'mon Lou, you know I don't gamble no more.

LITTLE TUNA

I hope not … How is your mother?

SAL

She's indestructible like a — like a — thing that can't be indestructed.

LITTLE TUNA

Did you call my father yet?

SAL

Yeah.

LITTLE TUNA

What did he say?

SAL

Said he'll be back from Vegas in the morning.

LITTLE TUNA

What else did he say?

SAL

He said, "Tell the Little Tuna to *handle* it."

LITTLE TUNA

What do you think he means by that?

SAL

Bang, bang, bang. Chop, chop, chop.

LITTLE TUNA

Maybe we should just wait till he gets back.

SAL

He told you to *handle* it, Lou. Handle it means handle it. If the Big Tuna comes home and this ain't handled…
?

LITTLE TUNA

You're right, Sal.

SAL

So just shoot 'em. Dinner's almost ready.

(Pause.)

LITTLE TUNA

Ya know what? My gun, it's fucked up.

SAL

Whaddya mean?

LITTLE TUNA

I left my gun in my jeans the other night, then when the maid did the laundry, she fucked it up, so now it's all fucked up.

SAL

Use my gun.

LITTLE TUNA

Nice gun.

SAL

Thanks.

(Pause.)

LITTLE TUNA

Sally, I don't feel like shooting nobody today.

SAL

Don't worry 'bout it, Cucino. I'll do it myself.

LITTLE TUNA

Thanks, Sal.

SAL

Go back upstairs now, play the Nintendo, I'll call you when dinner's ready.

LITTLE TUNA

Right … Sal?

SAL

Yeah?

LITTLE TUNA

Got some broccoli in your teeth.

SAL

Oh, thanks.

(Sal cocks his gun.)

LITTLE TUNA

So, Sal, do I know these people? Who are they?

SAL

Buncha junkies, I dunno.

LITTLE TUNA

… Take the bags off their heads, Sal. I wanna see these losers.

SAL

Why should you wanna see them?

LITTLE TUNA

Just do what I say.

SAL

C'mon Louie. Don't get soft on me now.

LITTLE TUNA

Soft? You think I'm soft?

SAL

I didn't mean soft.

LITTLE TUNA

Who's the boss here, you or me?

SAL

You.

LITTLE TUNA

Say it.

SAL

Say what?

LITTLE TUNA

Say I'm the boss.

SAL

You're the boss, Lou, no questions about it.

LITTLE TUNA

Okay well, the boss says take the bags off their heads so I can see them. You got a problem with that?

(Sal takes the bags off their heads.)

LITTLE TUNA

Maron, these two women were involved?

SAL

Dass right.

LITTLE TUNA

Ladies, why do you put me in this position? I don't wanna kill you. That's not my style. I prefer making love to you; wining and dining you, watching a lovely sunset over an expensive brandy with you. But you ladies, you leave me no choice. It's a good thing Sal here don't have a problem killing women.

SAL

The cross I bare.

LITTLE TUNA

Death, my friends, death is the sentence when you rob from Al "the Big Tuna" Pescatore, or me, "the Little Tuna"!

FLACO

We didn't know we was robbing from you.

LITTLE TUNA

Excuse me. Did you speak?

FLACO

Yes, as I was saying …

LITTLE TUNA

Stop! Sal, smack him for me …

(Sal smacks him hard.)

You don't speak! *I* speak! Get it?

FLACO

Yeah okay I …

LITTLE TUNA

Sal! Smack him.

(Sal smacks him harder.)

You don't speak. I speak, get it?

FLACO

I got it —

LITTLE TUNA

— Jesus, you're fucking dumb. Sal, box his ears.

SAL

How about I just shoot him?

LITTLE TUNA

Did I tell you to shoot him?

SAL

I'm just sayin, the quicker we shoot 'em, the quicker we can eat. I don't know about you, but I am starved over here. Ain't you starved?

LITTLE TUNA

What's for dinner?

SAL

I got a nice roast in the oven with them garlic potatoes you like.

LITTLE TUNA

Yeah? … We got enough butter?

SAL

Absolutely.

LITTLE TUNA

You sure?

SAL

It's a lock.

LITTLE TUNA

I beg you Sal: Don't tell me we got enough butter than we sit down ta eat, we ain't got enough fuckin' butter.

BOOCHIE

Please don't kill us, Sexy Mafia Man!

LITTLE TUNA

Oh! Pleading for your lives will do you no good whatsoever.

PAUL

I implore you to reconsider!

LITTLE TUNA

You *implore* me? Sal, what the fuck is this guy sayin'?

SAL

I think he's insultin' you.

LITTLE TUNA

(Re: Maggie.)

Ah, geez, look at this one here. She's cryin' Sal.

SAL

She wasn't cryin' when she was stealin' your money.

LITTLE TUNA

You want some Kleenex, miss?

SAL

Louie —

LITTLE TUNA

Do me a favor, Sal — go buy some butter.

SAL

Louie, what the hell you doin'?

LITTLE TUNA

"What the hell am I doin'?"?! … I'll tell ya what I'm doin': Go down the Farmer's Market, Sal, pick up a pound a fuckin' butter already.

SAL

We got more than enough butter, Lou!

LITTLE TUNA

What?!

SAL

Lou —

LITTLE TUNA

— Excuse me, Sal: Do I got a sign around my neck that says, "Argue with me, I'm a fuckin' half a Mook"?!

SAL

Louie —

LITTLE TUNA

Are you Son of the Tuna, Sal?! Are you heir to the throne?! Are you?!

SAL

No.

LITTLE TUNA

Who is?

SAL

You are.

LITTLE TUNA

I am what?

SAL

Son of the Tuna, heir to the throne.

LITTLE TUNA

I like butter, Sal. I would like for there to be an abundance of butter! Now: What are you gonna do?

SAL

I'm juss sayin' —

LITTLE TUNA

Butter, Sal. Butter! Butter! Butter!

SAL

… Can I start torturing them when I get back?

LITTLE TUNA

Fine … Now Go.

(Sal exits.)

BOOCHIE

I love butter, Mr˙ Tuna.

FLACO

Butter's great, yeah.

LITTLE TUNA

Shut up! … Ok, Now hear me and hear me good: Against my better judgment and because I'm a compassionate kind o' fella, I'm gonna take a moment

(because I'm a listener)

, to listen to whatever extenuating happenstances you might got to say.

FLACO

We didn't know we were stealing from you.

PAUL

We'd never intentionally steal from you.

BOOCHIE

I think you're cute, Mr˙ Tuna.

FLACO

It's all a big mistake.

BOOCHIE

We'll leave town.

PAUL

Spare us, Mr˙ Tuna.

FLACO

Yo, Mr˙ Tuna, yo, we throw ourselves on the mercy of your court!

PAUL

I beg of you!

LITTLE TUNA

Stop! All this begging. It's disgusting.

(To Maggie.)

You. How come you ain't debasing yourself like these other clowns? Do you speak?

MAGGIE

Yeah.

LITTLE TUNA

So, how come you're not pleading with me?

MAGGIE

You already said that we're gonna die.

LITTLE TUNA

But this is your chance to appeal.

MAGGIE

I don't wanna appeal.

LITTLE TUNA

Why not?

MAGGIE

Because you don't seem like somebody that an appeal would make any difference to.

FLACO

Yo, Mr˙ Tuna yo, don't listen to her! She didn't mean to make no insults about you.

LITTLE TUNA

What's your name?

FLACO

Flaco.

LITTLE TUNA

"Flock O"? Flock A' what? Flock A' fuckin' sheeps?

(To Maggie.)

Who are you, miss?

MAGGIE

Maggie.

LITTLE TUNA

What you just said to me before, Maggie, that was a very unfair thing ta say. But I appreciate at least you got the balls to say it.

BOOCHIE

My name is Boochie.

LITTLE TUNA

That's nice. So, Maggie, what are you doing with these losers?

MAGGIE

I guess I'm dying with them, aren't I?

LITTLE TUNA

Sassy! I like that. You're a very attractive woman. Maybe we can work something out.

MAGGIE

For all of us?

LITTLE TUNA

No. For you.

MAGGIE

I'm not interested.

LITTLE TUNA

So you'd rather die than date me? That's what you're saying?

MAGGIE

I'm saying if you kill these people, you better kill me too. But if you let us live, I'd consider going on a date with you — but only in a public place.

BOOCHIE

You can't do better than "consider"?! Give the man a firm "yes"!

MAGGIE

Mr˙ Tuna?

LITTLE TUNA

Louie. Please.

MAGGIE

Louie, the truth is we really had no idea we were stealing from you. Flaco, he's my ex-boyfriend, he set it up and he told us the money was clean.

FLACO

Before God, I thought it was clean!

LITTLE TUNA

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Everybody says the same shit.

FLACO

Yo, I ain't lyin' yo.

MAGGIE

Louie, he's telling the truth. He's not a liar, he's just incredibly stupid and careless.

PAUL

I'll vouch for that.

MAGGIE

The bottom line is, we stole and we were wrong to do it … Louie, I apologize.

PAUL

You're right, Maggie. All this begging and pleading clouded my head from the real issue, which is stealing itself. We tried to steal money from you, Mr˙ Tuna. We were wrong to do it. I apologize.

LITTLE TUNA

Apologies? This is new. Well okay: I, myself, apologize to you for having to kill youse all, but this is business. I got a reputation to uphold. Someday, I'll be a boss, and how's it gonna look if people think they can just apologize and call it a night?

MAGGIE

You're right, but do you accept our apologies?

LITTLE TUNA

Sure. Why not? Do you accept mine?

PAUL

It's just that me and Maggie, we're in a program.

LITTLE TUNA

Witness protection?

PAUL

No … for recovering thieves. We were trying to turn our lives around.

LITTLE TUNA

Well, you fucked up.

PAUL

Yes, we did.

MAGGIE

Louie, can I ask you something?

LITTLE TUNA

Sure, honey.

MAGGIE

Didn't you ever fuck up?

(Sal enters with a chain saw.)

SAL

Okay, let's party.

(Sal let's it rip. They all scream in terror.)

LITTLE TUNA

Sally!

SAL

Yeah Lou?

LITTLE TUNA

Change of plans … okay, guys, let me ask you something: Are you two in recovery also?

BOOCHIE

We're planning to enroll tomorrow.

LITTLE TUNA

Right … Here's what's going to happen. I should not be doing this. You're very fortunate that you caught me in a moment of weakness. Maggie, you're wonderful — I'd love to date you. The rest of you, I can see that you're not really professionals. I mean, only a bunch of stupid, fucking idiots could blow a job so easy. So, out of the kindness of my heart and because somebody once spared me in a moment of weakness …

SAL

Louie, what are you doing?

LITTLE TUNA

Sally. Go butter the roast.

SAL

Listen, your pop —

LITTLE TUNA

The roast, Sal! The fuckin' roast!

SAL

What'd these people say to you?

LITTLE TUNA

(A warning.)

Sal —

SAL

Lou!

LITTLE TUNA

You wanna know what these fuckin' people said to me?! They said: "Sal don't seem ta lissen to a fuckin' word you say — maybe you should give Sal's job to your cousin Dino, and Sal

should go back to runnin' numbers in Miami since he loves fuckin' Spanish people and HUMIDITY so fuckin' much"!

(Sal skulks off.)

LITTLE TUNA

Now look here, I'm gonna make this short and sweet: I need one body, and three thumbs. You can decide the who's and the wherefore's among yourselves — and believe me — this is a deal you're gettin' over here! The person who dies will get two in the back of the head. Quick and painless. Maggie, I hope you live: I got two in the fifth row for Mariah Carey next week … Anyway, at the stoke of dawn, I'll come back here with Sal. I'll expect your decision then. Goodnight.

(Louie exits Pause.)

PAUL

"God, grant me the serenity to —

FLACO

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

(Blackout.)

Act 2, Scene 2

Scene 2

Maggie, Boochie, Flaco and Paul are still tied to their chairs, arguing. It is almost dawn.

BOOCHIE

— If you ask me, Paul should be the one to die!

PAUL

Why me?

BOOCHIE

'Cuz you're fuckin' tired and annoying.

PAUL

Annoying?

BOOCHIE

Annoying!

FLACO

Amen.

PAUL

You think I'm annoying?

BOOCHIE

Are you deaf? Isn't this guy annoying?

PAUL

Even if I was annoying, which, I think that's very debatable, but even if I was, that's still no reason for me to die. Being annoying was not a capital crime the last time I checked.

FLACO

Yeah, well, it should be.

BOOCHIE

Dass right! Corny-ass scrub!

PAUL

Scrub?!

MAGGIE

Everybody stop the bullshit. That man said we had till dawn to decide who's going, and look out the window. It's almost dawn.

PAUL

I think we should just draw straws and let fate decide.

FLACO

Do you see any fuckin' straws around here?!

PAUL

No, but …

FLACO

"But"?! But fuck you "but"! We're tied to fuckin' chairs. Even if we had straws, we couldn't draw them!

MAGGIE

Calm down, Flaco.

FLACO

Yo, he's a stupid ass. It's your fault that he's here, Maggie.

MAGGIE

It wasn't Paul who got us into this mess, Flaco.

FLACO

I didn't know it was mob money.

PAUL

You should have staked it out better. You don't just steal 750,000 dollars on a whim!

FLACO

You're a stupid little clown-faced idiot orphan clown!

PAUL

You can call me all the childish things you want to, but the bottom line is that we're in this position because of you!

BOOCHIE

Dag, Flaco, I don't wanna die.

FLACO

You're not gonna die.

PAUL

Someone's gonna die.

FLACO

Well, not me.

PAUL

How about we play a game?

FLACO

A what?!

PAUL

We'll play a game. Loser dies.

MAGGIE

What kind of game?

PAUL

How about "States and Capitals?"

BOOCHIE

How you play that?

PAUL

I name a state, you give me the state's capital. You give a state to Flaco, he gives the capital —

BOOCHIE

— I don't like that game —

FLACO

— Me neither.

PAUL

Okay how about the "Animal" game?

BOOCHIE

What's that one?

PAUL

I say an animal — for example, Aardvark. Aardvark ends with "k." You have to say an animal that starts with "k."

BOOCHIE

Like kitty cat?

PAUL

Um —

FLACO

Yo, fuck that game.

(A beat.)

BOOCHIE

… Paul?

PAUL

Yeah.

BOOCHIE

I'm sorry I called you annoying.

PAUL

Oh … That's nice of you to say. Apology accepted.

BOOCHIE

You're not annoying. Actually, you're kinda cute.

PAUL

Well, thank you. So are you.

BOOCHIE

Can I share something with you?

PAUL

I guess.

BOOCHIE

I think you're very philosophy.

PAUL

Philosophy?

BOOCHIE

You know, like "factual," right?

PAUL

What are you trying to say?

BOOCHIE

Factual men … make me damp.

PAUL

"Damp"?

BOOCHIE

You know, down there?

PAUL

Oh.

BOOCHIE

Paul?

PAUL

Yeah?

BOOCHIE

I'm getting kinky thoughts.

PAUL

What kind of kinky thoughts?

BOOCHIE

Kinky ones.

PAUL

Like, what?

BOOCHIE

I'm thinking about you being real heroic and volunteering to be the one who dies. Would you like to volunteer?

PAUL

Why would I volunteer?

BOOCHIE

Because if you volunteer I'll blow you.

PAUL

Blow me?

FLACO

Yo! Take my advice, it's worth it.

MAGGIE

Flaco!

BOOCHIE

Look at my lips. I got nice lips, right? Big, wet, adventurous lips. You see my tongue? I could do a lot of things with it. Look at my throat … Can you picture it, Paul? I will do it all night long. I'll be getting you so hot and I'll even do it right up to the second they pull the trigger. I'll time it so you and the gun shoot at exactly the same time … Could I ax you something, Paul?

PAUL

I guess so.

BOOCHIE

Does Paul Junior like it when he gets fondled and licked?

PAUL

Well, he don't hate it.

BOOCHIE

Ooooooh!

PAUL

What?

BOOCHIE

I see Paul Junior and he looks very alert!

PAUL

He is not.

BOOCHIE

You like the idea to be a hero, right, Paul? Say yes, Paulie, and I'll salute you! I'll salute you like a hero should be saluted-ed.

PAUL

Look, you're not gonna seduce me so just leave me alone, okay?

BOOCHIE

… *Maricon!*

FLACO

… Yo, Listen up: I have an idea how we can settle this once and for all. How about each one of us take turns listing all the reasons that we want to live? Like, give a speech about it, and whoever the top three speakers are get to live.

PAUL

How're we going to judge?

FLACO

We'll vote.

BOOCHIE

(To Flaco.)

Wait! What is this?

PAUL

Well, you see …

BOOCHIE

(To Paul.)

Callate, pendejo!

(To Flaco.)

Flaco, honey, what's going on?

PAUL

May I propose a change in the topic?

FLACO

What change?!

PAUL

Instead of listing why we would like to live, we should be listing why our loss to society would be a bad thing.

FLACO

What?!

PAUL

For example, "Society will suffer if I die because" …

BOOCHIE

Because what?

PAUL

That's what you gotta tell us.

FLACO

I don't know about this.

MAGGIE

I think Paul's right.

FLACO

That's 'cuz you fuckin' him!

MAGGIE

I am not!

FLACO

I just think you could do better!

MAGGIE

C'mon. Let's just get this over with.

PAUL

Boochie, do you understand the criteria?

BOOCHIE

What's a criteria?

PAUL

Do you think the world will suffer if you die?

BOOCHIE

Oh, definitely.

PAUL

How about you, Flaco?

FLACO

Hell yeah. Yo, so we all agree? Who's first?

(Pause.)

BOOCHIE

I'll go first.

FLACO

You think that's a good idea?

BOOCHIE

I'm a speak my truth.

FLACO

Good luck baby.

BOOCHIE

Thank you.

(She clears her throat.)

Society would suffer if I die for many multiples of reasons. Number one: As a exotic dancer, I bring smiles to the faces of many sad lonely mens, and sometimes womens too if they into that. Number three: I am extremely fly — as you definitely noticed — maybe in the top ten of flyest womens in the city, and if they serious about keeping New York beautiful then they gotta need me around, right? … I'm also a sexual surrogate, which means I fuck for educationalism, which is important to society since I teach mens to fuck better, and God knows womankind could use more mens who fuck better — right, Maggie? I provide that. I also teach fellatios to the womens which I'm sure most mens could appreciate … Number eight: I believe in charity. When I get famous, I plan on donating a lot of money to the Ronald McDonald House so sick children of all ages could always eat McDonald's for free, so even when they die, they'll die happy. Oh, also I belong in the A˙S˙P˙C˙A …

(Pause.)

One more thing, which, I don't even know why I'm saying this, but, I got abused a lot as a child, people. A

lot. And I ain't sayin' that for you to feel sorry for me, even though I wouldn't mind if you did feel sorry so I could be one a the survivors, but, the point of this is that everyone in my family called me "garbage can," including my mother, which I think dat ain't very nice, but also I think is very false 'cuz I ain't no fuckin' garbage can! And even though I gots lots and lots of talents which make me definitely a big bargain for the society, even if I didn't have *any* of those amazing skills and dreams which I, like, process — even if I *was* a garbage can — which I'm not — I'd still be valuable 'cuz where you gonna put your garbage if you don't got no can? Someone's gotta be that can, right? So, for all these ideals and many more, I feel I am a valuable ass to society and many, many peoples of all the five boroughs, and maybe even the world, would have their lives be more messed up if I wasn't around to be around … Dass it. Thank you.

PAUL

Wow! That was really good, Boochie.

BOOCHIE

I know.

MAGGIE

Who's next?

PAUL

I'll go next.

FLACO

Oh, yeah?

PAUL

Is that okay with you?

FLACO

Yo, you wanna go next, go next.

PAUL

Okay, I will.

FLACO

But you better come up with some good shit, 'cuz if you don't, you going down!

PAUL

I'm aware of that.

FLACO

Alls I'm sayin': The pressure's on!

PAUL

I'm aware of the pressure.

FLACO

Okay, start talking.

PAUL

I will if you're through interrupting.

FLACO

Just don't choke.

PAUL

Look, why don't you go next?

FLACO

No, no! You already called it. You gotta go next or you forfeit. And if you forfeit, you lose. and if you lose, Sayonara, Mothahfucka!

PAUL

I don't like you. I wanna state that for the record.

FLACO

I don't like you either. You wanna do something about it?

PAUL

You mean fight?

FLACO

(Mimicking Paul.)

"You mean fight?"

PAUL

Oh, mimicking. You're mimicking me! That's very clever. I'll tell you, I'm a non-violent person, but you're pushing it!

FLACO

C'mon, mothahfucka! Let's go!

MAGGIE

Flaco!

FLACO

What?

MAGGIE

This is why I left you! This is exactly why!

FLACO

What?

MAGGIE

You're tied to a chair and you want to fight. You're immobilized! Don't you realize that?!

FLACO

This guy … This fuckin' guy! He's driving me fuckin' crazy!

PAUL

(Mimicking Flaco.)

"He's driving me crazy, he's driving me crazy"!

MAGGIE

Paul, knock it off!

BOOCHIE

Stop tormenting my man — ya big nerd-ass!

FLACO

(To Paul.)

C'mon you little bitch! Let's hear your stupid

speech!

PAUL

You wanna hear a speech?! Okay, the "Little Bitch" is gonna give a speech! Deal with this! "Why Society Would Suffer If I Died" by Paul Abraham Handleman —

FLACO

— Yo, you see that?! He wasn't even listening to Boochie's speech! He was jus' pretendin' to listen, and meanwhile he was practicin' his own shit!

PAUL

That's not true!

FLACO

Paul cheated, the mothahfuckah dies! Who's wit me?

PAUL

Lemme tell you *why* society would suffer if I died, Flaco. It would suffer because, unlike you, I *contribute* to society. I am a group leader in more than a dozen 'Self Help' organizations. I don't tear down other people's self-confidence and self-esteem, I help rebuild it. Also, unlike you, "Flaco," I have a job. I pay taxes. I give to charity. I go to temple. I vote. I donate my time to volunteer agencies. I make it my responsibility to know what's going on politically. I work with children. I work with the elderly. I try to treat people with *respect* and *kindness.* Do you, Flaco? Do you do any of these things? I am trying, a day at a time, to be a good person. To "live in the solution." Now, maybe that's not "exciting" or "sexy" — maybe it's even "nerdy" — but it works for me. I am not afraid to go out and try and make a difference in this screwed up world. I say "hello" to my neighbor if I see him on the street. I lend a hand. I contribute. If nothing else, I care. I am not ashamed to say that I am a good person and that I love me and that I *care.*

FLACO

… Is that it?

PAUL

Yes, it is.

FLACO

That sucked.

PAUL

No it didn't. Your turn, buck-o.

(Beat.)

FLACO

… Yeah well … I may not be perfect. I'm man enough to admit it. I may not even be a "good" person. I might even be a "bad" person. I steal, I do crimes, I deal a little dope, I don't do any of those things you just talked about. None of them. I smoke, drink, do alotta drugs, fuckin' curse — if I see something I want, I take it. I mugged a nun once. Two nuns! … I admit it. Up until now, I've been pretty selfish and bad — and I don't apologize for it! 'Cuz if you grew up how I did, you might be the same, maybe worse. You might be dead right now. Maybe I didn't have the

opportunities you had growing up, but I ain't making excuses. I take full responsibility for who I am. I did what I thought I had to do and here I am, still alive, still standing … That's right. I am standing here with the one gift no one's ever taken away from me and no one ever will because I won't let them! I'm standin' here with a world full a *potential* still coursin' through my veins! Look at me. I'm young, good looking, highly intelligent, charismatic! I got charisma, baby! I'm a natural born leader, always have been. Can you deny it? I think not! I got so much potential, yo! I could be president. I could be a leader of my people. Some day soon, I'll be a force for *righteousness* and when that happens, I'll move mountains! War is coming, yo, and when it does, the good guys gonna need people like me, 'cause people like me, we're rare! You're right about one thing, Paul. Up until now I haven't done much to make a difference but my time is coming, son — my time is

coming! If I die now, the world may be losing the next Che Gueverra, the next Malcolm X and shit, and they'll never even know I was here! I would hate for the world to suffer such a devastating loss, wouldn't you?! I'm a let your conscience be your guide, people. Finito!

BOOCHIE

Oh, Flaco. That was so perspirational!

FLACO

Suave, baby.

BOOCHIE

I love it when you get all serious. You're my Latin King.

FLACO

Siempre, siempre.

(Pause.)

PAUL

Would you like some more time before you begin, Maggie?

MAGGIE

I'm not good at talking about myself.

PAUL

Maggie, you're an amazing person. There are so many reasons why society shouldn't have to suffer your loss.

MAGGIE

Like what?

BOOCHIE

No telling her! That's cheating!

MAGGIE

Look, I can't do this.

PAUL

Yes you can.

MAGGIE

I can't.

PAUL

Do you understand the consequences of not crying?

MAGGIE

What if I end up living and you die? I'll feel guilty. And what if my life goes on and I'm still depressed and unhappy and I decide one day to kill myself? I won't be able to do it because

you already died, and if I kill myself that means you died needlessly. So I think it's prolly better that I just die now. So I'm only responsible for my own life and not any of yours.

BOOCHIE

Thank you, God, thank you, God! Maggie, thank you, and, Girl, I'm sorry I said that thing about you not being pretty and being a tubby — you really ain't that fat, especially if this were the olden days.

(Pause.)

FLACO

… Yo, fuck this! I have an announcement to make. I volunteer to die. Tomorrow, baby, I die in your place.

MAGGIE

Flaco —

FLACO

I know I wasn't the best boyfriend, but one thing I do know is you're a special person.

BOOCHIE

Flaco, what about me?

FLACO

You're special too, baby … Do you love me, Maggie?

MAGGIE

Stop!

FLACO

Nah, fuck stop! Do you love me?

MAGGIE

No.

FLACO

You're lyin'

MAGGIE

I am not!

FLACO

I gotta tell you something. I miss your smile. I miss waking up in the middle of the night and watching you sleep. I miss that embarrassed look you get on your face when I catch you naked coming out of the shower. I miss your smell. I miss you. Do you miss me? Do you?

MAGGIE

… Flaco, I am not a happy person. I can't remember ever being a happy person.

FLACO

You were happy with me. I know you were. And you bettah be happy in the future if I lay my life down for you, or else I'm a come back as a ghost and haunt your ass! I'll be, like, "Boo" 'n' shit!

MAGGIE

I've made up my mind, Flaco. You guys won the game. I lost. Fair is fair, and dass it. No mas.

(Pause.)

PAUL

I lost the game, Maggie.

MAGGIE

No you didn't.

PAUL

Yes I did. I lied in my speech.

MAGGIE

About what?

PAUL

Everything. I don't do shit for other people.

MAGGIE

You did something for me.

PAUL

But did I do something for you 'cuz it was program, or

was it because I wanted to, you know, sleep with you?

FLACO

I knew it! I knew that shit!

PAUL

It's one thing to do something when it's easy — but I don't think I've ever really stepped up when it's hard … It should be me who dies. I lied … I'm a liar. I should die.

(Pause.)

BOOCHIE

I lied too … It's true I was abused a lot, but what I didn't say is I got a really good expensive therapist now, and she says we making a lot a positive progress.

FLACO

Fuck … That nun I mugged? I may have slapped her a little.

BOOCHIE

I stole a Rolex off a client las' week.

FLACO

Her friend? The other Nun? — I kicked her in her ass.

BOOCHIE

I'm a manipulator.

FLACO

I'm a convicted felon.

MAGGIE

I'm selfish.

FLACO

I'm a predator.

PAUL

I slept with my Aunt.

FLACO

You what?!

BOOCHIE

Paul, thass fuckin' disgusting!

PAUL

Who you talkin' to — you're a fuckin' whore!

BOOCHIE

And you're a aunt fucker!

FLACO

You're a fuckin' dick, man! A sick, aunt-fucking dick!

PAUL

I'm a dick?!

MAGGIE

Chill out!

PAUL

At least I don't go around acting like somebody I'm not, "Flocko"! I bet you can't speak two words of Spanish!

FLACO

Yeah? How much Yiddish you know, mothahfuckah?! 'Cuz I ain't never met no brother named "Paul," much less "Handlerag," or whatever the fuck name you tryin' ta call your clown-ass self!

PAUL

Punk ass White boy!

FLACO

Fake-recovered wannabe Jew!

BOOCHIE

Word!

MAGGIE

Stop it! Stop!

FLACO

Yo, Maggie —

MAGGIE

Look out the window! All of you! Look!

(They all look. Pause. Dawn. It gets quiet.)

PAUL

Uh oh.

FLACO

… Dag.

BOOCHIE

… Them birds be chirpin'.

PAUL

… Yup.

FLACO

Stupid birds … I don't like birds.

BOOCHIE

Birds is nice, Flaco. What's wrong wit' birds?

FLACO

I dunno … Nuthin' I guess.

(Pause.)

PAUL

… I had a bird once. Melvin. He used to like to eat cotton balls.

FLACO

Gee, what an inneresting fact.

MAGGIE

Flaco —

FLACO

Sorry.

(Beat.)

MAGGIE

You really love me, Flaco?

FLACO

Like I know my own name.

MAGGIE

Let me go. I'm a sad, fearful person. I hurt people because of it.

FLACO

No you don't —

MAGGIE

I tried to hurt myself last month —

FLACO

— You what?

MAGGIE

I got scared at the last minute, but I know I'm gonna try it again, 'cuz this feeling in me — it ain't changed since as long as I can remember. That's the real truth. It's dawn. It's time.

(Lights fade.)

Act 2, Scene 3

Scene 3

The den. Dawn. Maggie, Flaco, Paul, and Boochie are being held at gunpoint by Sal. The Little Tuna enters:

LITTLE TUNA

(Yawning.)

Sally, you put the coffee on?

SAL

It's percolatin'

LITTLE TUNA

Good.

SAL

I made those nice Belgian waffles, too; with the country sausages you like.

LITTLE TUNA

Are they plump?

SAL

What?

LITTLE TUNA

The sausages. You know I like 'em plump.

SAL

They're very plump.

LITTLE TUNA

Did you get the donuts?

SAL

Yeah.

LITTLE TUNA

Assorted flavors?

SAL

I told them "gimme two of everything."

LITTLE TUNA

Good man. Sally, bring out the donuts. Our guests are hungry.

SAL

Louie, these are the *good* donuts from the *good* place. You sure you wanna waste them on these guys?

LITTLE TUNA

C'mon, these people, they're probably starvin'.

SAL

So, shoot 'em. They won't be hungry no more.

LITTLE TUNA

Sally?! Is this how you wanna start the mornin'?

SAL

I'm just sayin' —

LITTLE TUNA

— Fuckin' donuts, fuckin' now!

(Sal exits.)

Good morning … Now let me start by telling you that I did a little research last night. I got information on all of you, and it pains me to have to do what I gotta do because I can see from my informants that you're all a bunch of very low-level criminals at best, and a bunch of pathetic, harmless losers at worst. Maggie, I got a

hold of your school records. It seems that you are a classic under-achiever. High test scores and poor grades. I'm disappoint-ed in you.

(Sal reenters.)

SAL

Fresh donuts, boss.

LITTLE TUNA

Gimme the tray.

(Little Tuna grabs a donut for himself and offers the tray to Boochie.)

Have a donut.

BOOCHIE

I'd rather have something else.

LITTLE TUNA

like what?

BOOCHIE

Something "Italian."

LITTLE TUNA

You mean, like, a canoli?

BOOCHIE

Yeah, I want your canoli, Mr˙ Tuna!

LITTLE TUNA

My canoli? Hey! Eat a donut and forget about that shit!

(To Flaco.)

Hey you, tough guy, take a donut.

FLACO

Thanks, yo.

LITTLE TUNA

Not that one

FLACO

Oh.

(Flaco shuffles through the donuts, poking and examining them.)

LITTLE TUNA

Hey! What are you doin'?!

FLACO

Looking for a custard one.

LITTLE TUNA

Sal! Shoot him!

(Sal fires an errant shot.)

Whoa, whoa, I was just kidding! Hey kid, it gets me upset when people put their fingers all over all the donuts like that. Here, take this one.

FLACO

Thanks, Mr˙ Tuna …

LITTLE TUNA

Maggie. You can have any donut you like. How 'bout this nice Boston cream?

MAGGIE

Sure.

PAUL

Umm, Maggie?

MAGGIE

What?

PAUL

You're not gonna eat that, are you?

MAGGIE

Why not?

PAUL

Refined sugar, Maggie. That's a no-no.

LITTLE TUNA

Hey, you! Shaddup!

PAUL

Maggie.

(Pause.)

MAGGIE

Sorry Louie, I can't eat it.

LITTLE TUNA

Why not?

PAUL

Maggie's a compulsive overeater.

LITTLE TUNA

A what?

PAUL

She eats to bury her pain … Um, you look like you might be a compulsive overeater too, if you don't mind me saying so.

LITTLE TUNA

You tryin' to say I'm overweight?

PAUL

Not at all. Just that you eat to bury your pain. Like, for instance, right now, you don't wanna kill us. It's causing you pain. So instead, you eat.

LITTLE TUNA

So you sayin' I'm fat?

FLACO

Yo, Mr˙ Tuna. Don't listen to this idiot. You're very trim. Believe me.

PAUL

See, Mr˙ Tuna! You're eating! You're burying your pain.

LITTLE TUNA

I'm gonna bury you in about a minute —

PAUL

Put the donut down, Louie!

LITTLE TUNA

What?!

MAGGIE

Paul. Stop it!

PAUL

It's okay, Maggie. Lou, you don't wanna eat that donut.

LITTLE TUNA

Why not?

PAUL

Because "there is no chemical solution to a spiritual problem."

LITTLE TUNA

Yeah? Well there is a violent solution to an

annoying problem. Sal, give me the gun. I'll shoot him myself.

PAUL

Mr˙ Tuna, you can shoot me, but it won't solve your problem. The first step in overcoming problems is to admit them. You're a compulsive overeater.

LITTLE TUNA

I am not!

PAUL

Mr˙ Tuna. I'm a compulsive overeater. You got all the symptoms.

LITTLE TUNA

You're a compulsive overeater?

PAUL

Yes, I am.

LITTLE TUNA

… So, you don't eat donuts?

PAUL

Not for 994 days.

LITTLE TUNA

… What would happen if you ate a donut now?

PAUL

I wouldn't eat one.

LITTLE TUNA

But, say if you did.

PAUL

Well, it would probably be a very painful experience.

LITTLE TUNA

Why?

PAUL

Look, why don't we all just go to a meeting right now? You could learn all about it.

BOOCHIE

I'm up for that!

FLACO

Me too!

LITTLE TUNA

I got a better idea.

(To Paul.)

Eat a donut right now.

PAUL

What?

LITTLE TUNA

Here. Eat it.

PAUL

I can't.

LITTLE TUNA

Eat it or I'll shoot you.

PAUL

I don't believe you.

LITTLE TUNA

Sal, take the gun. Do you believe that Sal will shoot you?!

PAUL

Okay, okay, I'll eat it.

LITTLE TUNA

Eat the whole tray! … Sally, if he stops eating, you start shooting.

SAL

Eat! Eat!

LITTLE TUNA

Gimme one of those.

(Louie takes another donut.)

All right, let's get this over with. Who's dyin' over here?

MAGGIE

Me.

LITTLE TUNA

You! Why you?

MAGGIE

It was my decision.

LITTLE TUNA

You sure you don't wanna change your mind? 'Cuz I'll just shoot someone else, like him!

FLACO

Do what you gotta do, you compulsive overeater, you.

LITTLE TUNA

Just say the word and you'll live

MAGGIE

I can't. I won't.

LITTLE TUNA

Maggie, I like you. I don't know what it is, I don't even know you, but for some strange reason, I can't bear to shoot you.

SAL

You don't have to shoot her. I'll shoot her.

LITTLE TUNA

I know, but still, I'll feel weird about it.

PAUL

Why don't you let us all go? It's because you're a good person that you don't wanna kill her! It's because you're not an animal! You have a conscience!

LITTLE TUNA

Hey you, keep eating!

PAUL

You have a chance here to take a giant step towards redemption. You know, they have support groups for people like you. There's a guy in my Thursday group therapy belongs to a Cosa Nostra twelve-step, I could introduce you.

SAL

Please lemme shoot him! —

PAUL

— You're in denial, Mr˙ Tuna!

LITTLE TUNA

After we shoot Maggie, I'm gonna stab you! Repeatedly!

FLACO

Yo, Mr˙ Tuna, Don't take Maggie. Take me.

BOOCHIE

No! Flaco!

FLACO

I'm sorry, baby, but that's how it's gonna be.

LITTLE TUNA

No. We're gonna do this how Maggie wants it. Sal, put her in the chair …

(To Maggie.)

… You sure you don't want a donut, sweetheart?

MAGGIE

Just do it.

LITTLE TUNA

All right. God be with you and all a that. Sal: Do the job.

(The door swings open. Alphonse "The Big Tuna" Pescatore enters with luggage.)

BIG TUNA

Hey, knock it off! That's a floor-length mink rug you're shooting her on. I mean, my carpet cleaner is good, but he's not a fuckin' magician. Louie, who the fuck are these people?

LITTLE TUNA

They're the people from the robbery, Pop.

BIG TUNA

These are the people from the robbery?

LITTLE TUNA

Yeah.

BIG TUNA

Then, why the fuck are they still alive? Jesus! I can't even leave you alone for the weekend.

LITTLE TUNA

I'm sorry.

BIG TUNA

C'mere, Louie.

LITTLE TUNA

OW!

BIG TUNA

This place is a fuckin' mess. What, have you been partying all week while I've been away?

LITTLE TUNA

No, Pop.

BIG TUNA

Sal! You were supposed to take care of him.

SAL

OW!

BIG TUNA

I hope you weren't at the track this weekend 'cuz Joey the Turtle says he saw you there.

SAL

The Turtle's a liar! I swear Uncle Al, I don't gamble no more.

BIG TUNA

How come I have to come home after a long hard weekend and find these people in my living room Sal, when they shoulda been dead yesterday?

SAL

Louie didn't wanna shoot nobody 'cuz he's a fuckin' homo!

(Beat.)

BIG TUNA

Louis, I'm very disappointed in you. Go take these people out back and shoot them. And when you get back, me and you are going to have a long talk.

LITTLE TUNA

Pop, I can't shoot them.

BIG TUNA

Why not?

LITTLE TUNA

I told them I'd only kill one.

BIG TUNA

So, shoot one, let Sal shoot the rest.

LITTLE TUNA

But Daddy, I made a deal with them.

BIG TUNA

You made a deal?

LITTLE TUNA

Yeah.

BIG TUNA

Spare three, shoot one?

LITTLE TUNA

Yeah.

BIG TUNA

What do you get in return?

LITTLE TUNA

I don't remember.

BIG TUNA

Well then, that's a shit deal, don't you think?

PAUL

Mr˙ Big Tuna? I'm Paul Abraham Handleman and I'd like to say that you should be proud of your son. There are seeds of compassion and love in him.

BIG TUNA

Seeds, eh?

PAUL

That's right.

BIG TUNA

I always worried about that. He gets it from his mother.

PAUL

You should support him, not berate him.

BIG TUNA

What'd you say your name was?

PAUL

Handleman.

BIG TUNA

I knew a Handleman once. Maury Handleman.

PAUL

Yes, yes! He's my grandfather.

BIG TUNA

Grandfather? Well, knowing Maury, I ain't surprised — liberal bastard. Actually, you two got a lot in common.

PAUL

Thank you.

BIG TUNA

Yeah, He was a preachy little bastard just like you. Always saying I should give more to "charity." I don't like charity … Maury Handleman … what a piece of work. One time, your grandpop comes to me with this big score. He was gonna hit the Republican National Committee Campaign Fund safe. Steal all the money. He had it planned perfectly. I was impressed. I was all set to collaborate with his Den a … What'd they call themselves?

PAUL

Den of Thieves.

BIG TUNA

Right. Den of Thieves. I was all set to do it and I axed him, "What's my cut?" "Nothing," he says. "Nothing"? He tells me we're takin' all the money to fund some book thing, a bunch of trucks with books, goin' to inner-city neighborhoods givin' out books.

PAUL

The bookmobile!

BIG TUNA

Crazy bastard. Hey, is your grandfather still alive?

PAUL

Yes, he is. He has his own locksmith shop in Brooklyn Heights.

BIG TUNA

That's terrific. I'll have to visit him sometime

PAUL

He'd love that.

BIG TUNA

Absolutely. Okay, Sal. Take them all out back and shoot 'em!

LITTLE TUNA

Pop! You can't shoot these people.

BIG TUNA

Why not?

LITTLE TUNA

They're good people.

BIG TUNA

Son, I know what you're thinking, and it's admirable. But good people die every day. We don't know why, but they do. It's God's way.

LITTLE TUNA

But Pop, why can't we just forgive them?

BIG TUNA

Forgive? What's that?

LITTLE TUNA

Like the time I burned down the house; like the time I kidnapped my principal —

BIG TUNA

— I know what you're saying, but those incidents was different. You didn't steal 500 grand from me.

FLACO

500 grand?

PAUL

Mr˙ Tuna, did you just say we stole 500 grand from you?

FLACO

So where's the other 250?

BIG TUNA

What are you talking about?

PAUL

There was 750,000 dollars in that safe. I opened it myself. I counted it!

BIG TUNA

Wait a second! Sal, you told me 500 large.

SAL

'Cuz that's what it was. This kid don't know what he's talking about.

PAUL

Mr˙ Big Tuna, it was 750,000 dollars. I swear. I counted it. I even showed it to Maggie.

BIG TUNA

Who's Maggie?

PAUL

The girl with the blindfold.

LITTLE TUNA

Maggie, how much money was in that safe?

MAGGIE

750,000 dollars.

(The Tuna draws his gun.)

BIG TUNA

Where you goin' Sal?

SAL

Feed the cat.

BIG TUNA

We ain't got a cat. Son, go upstairs and check out Sal's room.

LITTLE TUNA

Okay Pop.

(Louie exits upstairs.)

SAL

I swear to God, Uncle Al —

BIG TUNA

— Just sit tight … So, how was the weather while I was away?

BOOCHIE

Very pleasant, Mr˙ Tuna.

BIG TUNA

What's your name?

BOOCHIE

Boochie.

BIG TUNA

You gotta nice rack, Boochie.

BOOCHIE

I know.

(Louie reenters.)

BIG TUNA

What is it, son? What'd you find?

LITTLE TUNA

250,000 cash and a John Holmes blowup doll.

SAL

The doll ain't mine, it's for a friend.

BIG TUNA

This upsets me, Sal.

SAL

I know … I'm upset too.

BIG TUNA

I don't know how I can help you over here.

SAL

… I'm a compulsive gambler, Uncle Al, I need them twelve steps.

BIG TUNA

… You ready to take the first step?

SAL

Sure, why not?.

BIG TUNA

Step One: Die!

(Big Tuna shoots Sal dead.)

I didn't have a choice, son.

LITTLE TUNA

I know Pop —

BIG TUNA

Get him up before he ruins the carpet … It looks like you people saved me a lot of money. I'm gonna do you a favor. Everybody, give me a thumb, we'll call it even.

LITTLE TUNA

C'mon, Pop. Don't be cheap. These people just made us an extra 250,000 we didn't even know we had. No thumbs.

BIG TUNA

All right, all right. No thumbs. Christ. Beat it, all of you … Son, Gimme a donut.

LITTLE TUNA

Here, Pop.

BIG TUNA

Have one too, son.

LITTLE TUNA

… I can't.

BIG TUNA

Why not?

LITTLE TUNA

I think I'm a compulsive overeater.

PAUL

Bravo Lou!

BIG TUNA

A what?

LITTLE TUNA

Pop. I eat to bury my pain.

BIG TUNA

What pain?

LITTLE TUNA

I got pain Pop. Pain all over.

BIG TUNA

Your girlfriend beating on you again?

LITTLE TUNA

Not that kind of pain, Pop.

BIG TUNA

What's the problem, son?

(Pause.)

LITTLE TUNA

I, I don't think I wanna be a wiseguy no more, Pop. I'm not cut out for it.

BIG TUNA

… Gimme another donut, son.

LITTLE TUNA

You see?

BIG TUNA

You see, what?

LITTLE TUNA

You're a compulsive overeater too.

BIG TUNA

Who's puttin' this crap in your head, son?

LITTLE TUNA

These guys. These two over here are compulsive overeaters and compulsive thieves. They're in some kind of

recovery

program.

BIG TUNA

What about you? You in recovery too?

BOOCHIE

No, Mr˙ Tuna. I'm in un-covery.

BIG TUNA

I like her.

(To Flaco.)

What about you?

FLACO

Well, Mr˙ Tuna … can I call you Al?

BIG TUNA

No!

FLACO

Okay, well, I don't believe in all this recovery shit.

BIG TUNA

Me neither.

FLACO

I think it's a government conspiracy to turn everybody soft.

BIG TUNA

Now here's a man with a head on his shoulders.

FLACO

But —

BIG TUNA

What but?

FLACO

But Maggie, she's my girl. Well, ex-girl.

BIG TUNA

Who's Maggie?

LITTLE TUNA

Over here Pop.

FLACO

I'm in love with Maggie, Mr˙ Tuna. So, even though I think this crap is a load of crap, I'd be willing to give it a shot if she'd take me back.

MAGGIE

You would?

FLACO

I was thinkin' maybe I'd get a legit job. Like a bookie, or something.

MAGGIE

Flaco.

FLACO

Did I say bookie? I meant busboy.

BIG TUNA

You'd be a busboy for this girl?

FLACO

If I had to, yeah.

MAGGIE

You could go back to school, Flaco.

FLACO

That's an idea. I'll get my grammar-school equivalency and take it from there.

BIG TUNA

This is very touching, over here.

(To Louie.)

So, son, you want out, eh?

LITTLE TUNA

Yeah, Daddy, I do.

BIG TUNA

You wanna go back to school too?

LITTLE TUNA

Sure, why not?

BIG TUNA

I'll call Yale. We got friends in the New Haven area. You could start next week.

LITTLE TUNA

I was thinking about goin' to a meeting with these guys. Is that Okay?

BIG TUNA

Do what you gotta do, son.

LITTLE TUNA

You wanna come too, Pop?

PAUL

That's a great idea.

BIG TUNA

Don't push your luck, Handleman.

(Beat. Big Tuna grabs another donut.)

You kids today, you baffle me with your problems. Nah, really, I'm standing here in a state of bafflement. You think we didn't have problems in the old days?

LITTLE TUNA

We know you did, Pop.

BIG TUNA

Forget about it. Our problems made your problems look fuckin' ridiculous! When I was you people's age, I had three paper routes, I drove a fruit truck, worked part-time at the barbershop — all those jobs I did before noon. Then I went to the trade school. Took classes, got out of school, worked at your Uncle Marco's restaurant till midnight, went home, slept three hours and did it all over again. One day I says to your Grandpa Pepe, "This is too much for me. I got unhappy problems. Life's getting me down." You know what Granpa Pepe said to me?

LITTLE TUNA

Was it —

BIG TUNA

— Grandpa Pepe said to me — I'll never forget it — "Life … is like an artichoke."

BOOCHIE

An artichoke?

BIG TUNA

That's right, honey. See, an artichoke's got the sweet meat inside. But it's small. The rest of the artichoke, you can't do nothin' wit' it. Anyways, Grandpa Pepe, he says; "Life is like an artichoke: you take the sweet meat. The rest? You throw it away." Now, that's what you young people gotta friggin' learn.

PAUL

… So, that helped you out?

BIG TUNA

Yeah, that and the fact that I turned to crime. The two of them — they made my life a lot better.

FLACO

Great story, Mr˙ Tuna.

PAUL

I disagree.

BIG TUNA

Excuse me?

MAGGIE

Paul —

PAUL

— No disrespect Mr˙ Tuna, but life is *not* like an artichoke.

MAGGIE

Paul —

PAUL

And even if it was, people are not capable of simply throwing away all the bad stuff that happens to them! That's why we live in a nation filled with abusers and addicts, because people like Grandpa Fuckin' Pepe tell us we're *not supposed* to dwell on the bad

things, and that we *should be able* to just hang on to the good things, and that makes us feel guilty for even

acknowledging our pain; it makes us feel inadequate that we can't just block it out, so we bury it; and replace honesty with lies, humility with self importance, and love of God with hatred of self!

FLACO

(To Big Tuna, re: Paul.)

I don't know this guy!

BIG TUNA

You finished, Handleman?

PAUL

You just killed your own nephew! You think you're gonna be able to just throw away that part of the artichoke, "Al"?!

LITTLE TUNA

Pop, remember your blood pressure —

FLACO

(To Paul.)

You are seriously a demented retart!

MAGGIE

— Paul, it's time to go

PAUL

I'm just trying to carry the message to those who still suffer!

BIG TUNA

Son, why don't you take your new friends out to breakfast?

LITTLE TUNA

Sure thing, pop.

BIG TUNA

(Re: Paul.)

Not him! Me and Paulie here are gonna have a little pow wow.

LITTLE TUNA

Pop —

BIG TUNA

It was nice meeting youse people. Maggie, if this guy gives you any problems, you give me a call.

MAGGIE

Thanks, Mr˙ Tuna.

FLACO

Mr˙ Tuna, can I have your autograph? I've followed all your trials in the papers, I'm a big fan

BIG TUNA

Sure kid. Here you go.

BOOCHIE

Bye, Mr˙ Sexy Tuna

BIG TUNA

I'll see you again, Lamb Chop.

(Little Tuna tries to embrace Big Tuna.)

LITTLE TUNA

I love you, pop.

(Big Tuna fishes for car keys.)

BIG TUNA

… Here. Take the Lexus, but don't fuck it up.

(They exit. Beat.)

PAUL

Mr˙ Tuna sir, perhaps I was a little inappropriate a moment ago, taking your inventory like that, and I just want to seize this opportunity to beg your forgiveness, because, the fact is, I have a very low tolerance for pain and —

BIG TUNA

Step One: We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable. Two: Came to believe —

PAUL

You're in program?

BIG TUNA

Twenty years. I'm an alcoholic.

PAUL

I thought you looked familiar!

BIG TUNA

Shaddup! … I killed my nephew out of anger and I'm gonna have to live with that, but the fact is that he was a hopeless degenerate gambler and I took him out of his misery, and I'm sure that if I had prayed about it first, that the Higher Power of My Understanding woulda okayed the hit.

PAUL

If you say so.

BIG TUNA

I do say so! Now let's talk about you. You stole money from me and you disrespected me in front of my son. What do you think you should do about that?

PAUL

I need to make a coupla amends to you.

BIG TUNA

Did you see my property on your way in here last night?

PAUL

Very impressive.

BIG TUNA

We like it. I got my own forest out back, fifty acres.

PAUL

Wow.

BIG TUNA

My gardener's on vacation, so I want you to mow the forest for me.

PAUL

Mow the forest?

BIG TUNA

The forest, yes. Make it nice. That's amend number one … Amend number two is I want you to sponsor my son in that overeater program. You got balls, Handleman, and you got the strength of your convictions. I admire that in a man. Now, go out back and start mowing my forest, and when you finish sometime next month, come back and see me and we'll talk about sugar ‘n’ spice and everything like that.

PAUL

Sugar and spice?

BIG TUNA

To the forest, Handleman. Now!

PAUL

Yes, sir. Thank you sir.

(Paul exits. A beat. Boochie enters.)

BOOCHIE

Mr˙ Tuna?

BIG TUNA

Boochie, what are you doin' over here?

BOOCHIE

I thought you might like some friendly company.

(Boochie takes off her coat.)

BIG TUNA

My God, you were built for lovin', weren't you?

BOOCHIE

Uh-huh

BIG TUNA

C'mere

(They embrace.)

Maron! You're a hot tamale!

BOOCHIE

And you're a big calzoney, Mr˙ Tuna

BIG TUNA

Al.

BOOCHIE

Al.

BIG TUNA

Lemme ax you something, Boochie You like diamonds and furs and a life of extravagant leisure?

BOOCHIE

Yeah. You like fellatios?

BIG TUNA

… I think we're gonna get along fine.

(Lights fade.)

End of Play